

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

---



***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney  
Karen P. Hewitt***

---

***For Further Information, Contact: Assistant U.S. Attorney Sherri Walker Hobson at (619) 557-5027***

---

***For Immediate Release***

## **UNDERGROUND MARIJUANA GROWER PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO MANUFACTURING MARIJUANA, MONEY LAUNDERING, AND FORFEITURE OF ASSETS**

### **NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - May 18, 2007**

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced that Damien Anthony Andrews pled guilty today in federal court in San Diego before the Honorable Dana M. Sabraw, to conspiracy to manufacture marijuana plants, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 846 and 841(a)(1), and two counts of laundering money based on wire fraud, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1957.

As part of his plea, Andrews also agreed to forfeit his three residential properties, including the 39.7 acres of parcel containing the log cabin located in Santa Ysabel, California, where the underground marijuana grow was found, a residence on Compass Road, Oceanside, California, and his beach residence on Neptune Avenue in Encinitas. The last is Andrews' primary residence; it was purchased by Andrews for \$1.4 million in November 2006.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Sherri Walker Hobson, who is prosecuting the case, Andrews was arrested following the execution of a federal search warrant at his log cabin on March 28, 2007. According to court documents, the Drug Enforcement Administration (“DEA”), the San Diego Narcotic Task Force (“NTF”), and the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation (“IRS”) found a sophisticated clandestine indoor marijuana cultivation operation consisting of 454 marijuana plants. The grow was concealed underground, accessible by a concealed closet elevator in a garage structure on the parcel. From the elevator shaft, there was a 4-foot wide, 65-foot tunnel that led to large underground grow rooms with irrigation, lighting, electrical and ventilation systems. According to court documents, Andrews owns the 39-acre parcel, which had a sophisticated surveillance system with multiple cameras and monitors located in and around the property. As part of the plea agreement, Andrews admitted to conspiring with others to grow marijuana in the underground location at this Santa Ysabel property. His Santa Ysabel property has no liens and is valued at \$450,000.

In connection with the money laundering counts, Andrews admitted that he knowingly and intentionally submitted materially false information to lenders about the true source of his income, the amount of income, and his employment history. Andrews also admitted that he obtained fraudulent loans in the amount of \$1,120,000.00 from one company and \$409,613.26 from another company to purchase his residences on Compass Road and Neptune Avenue. Andrews agreed to expedite the sales of these two properties with the proceeds being forfeited to the United States.

United States Attorney Hewitt said, “These sophisticated marijuana growing operations demonstrate the lengths to which drug traffickers will go to make their illicit profit. The arrests of those responsible and the steps taken to forfeit their properties establish our unwavering commitment to taking the profit out of their criminal conduct.”

DEA Acting Special Agent in Charge Alan Poleszak said, “This investigation serves as an example of the commitment that DEA and NTF are putting forth to halt the proliferation of these types of marijuana cultivation operations. As these trafficking organizations develop more sophisticated methods of concealing

their activities, we will continue to intensify our efforts and dedicate all the resources necessary to seek them out and dismantle their operations.”

“Marijuana growers are using sophisticated equipment and measures to transform their seemingly quiet suburban homes into illicit grow factories. But, now we have seen the extreme - a clandestine grow operation that can be fully hidden and operate underground. These lucrative illegal operations can function with little scrutiny which makes them attractive to the narcotics criminal element, but can put our safe communities in harm’s way,” said Kenneth J. Hines, Special Agent in Charge, IRS Criminal Investigation, San Diego Field Office. “IRS Special Agents are an essential component in these types of investigations. We will uncover the financial trail of these grow operations and locate their assets; wherever they may be, and seize the assets so they cannot be used to continue their illegal grow operations.”

United States Attorney Hewitt praised the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) for the coordinated team effort in the culmination of this investigation. Several local, state and federal law enforcement agencies assisted in this OCDETF investigation, including DEA, San Diego Narcotic Task Force, IRS, and the United States Marshal’s Service. The OCDETF program was created to consolidate and utilize all law enforcement resources in this country’s battle against major drug trafficking.

Judge Sabraw scheduled a sentencing hearing for August 3, 2007.

### **DEFENDANT**

Damien Anthony Andrews

Case Number: 07cr1014

Civil Complaints for Forfeitures of Properties: 07cv0567, 07cv0569

### **SUMMARY OF CHARGES AS TO DAMIEN ANDREWS**

Conspiracy to Manufacture Marijuana Plants (100 plants or more)  
Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1) and 846  
Penalties: 5 year minimum mandatory to 40 years in custody;  
4 years of supervised release, \$1,000,000 fine

Money Laundering based on Wire Fraud

Title 18, United States Code, Section 1957

Penalties: 20 years maximum, 3 years of supervised release, and \$500,000 fine

Criminal Forfeiture (Conspiracy to Manufacture Marijuana)

39.2 Acres in Santa Ysabel, California

Criminal Forfeiture (Money Laundering)

Property on Compass Street, Oceanside, California

Property on Neptune Avenue, Encinitas, California

### **PARTICIPATING AGENCIES**

Drug Enforcement Administration

San Diego Narcotics Task Force

Internal Revenue Service

United States Marshals Service